



TA-00

Department of Energy

Washington, DC 20585

July 14, 2000



Ms. Joni Arends
Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety
107 Cienaga Street
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501

Dear Ms. Arends:

Thank you for your letter to Senator Pete Domenici regarding the Groundwater Characterization Program at the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL). Senator Domenici forwarded your letter to the Department of Energy for reply.

This work is being performed as part of a State of New Mexico approved Hydrogeologic Work Plan which is an installation of a network of deep wells to characterize the aquifer at LANL to better define the hydrogeologic conditions at the site and allow predictions of contaminant fate and transport.

The R-5 regional aquifer well that is funded by Defense Programs was scheduled for construction start in Fiscal Year 2000 (May 2000). However, due to complicated installation problems with the R-25 well that is also funded by Defense Programs, including structural collapse at depths of 1,064 and 1,895 feet, approximately \$600,000 in repair costs were incurred to complete the installation of this well. These repair costs affected funds necessary for installation of the R-5 well. The Department and LANL considered the complicated repair costs for the R-25 well and determined they were necessary due to the monitoring value of a 1,900-foot well in an area of high explosive groundwater contamination.

Utilizing lessons learned and corrective actions to the drilling program activities since occurrence of the R-25 well construction problems, subsequent wells have been completed successfully. Despite the schedule slip for installation of the R-5 well, which is now scheduled to begin in February 2001, the overall completion in the 2004-2005 time frame for the Hydrogeologic Work Plan is still on schedule.

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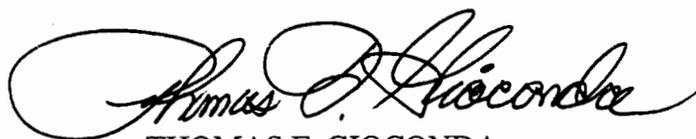
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The Department is committed to the implementation of the Hydrogeologic Work Plan and also committed to public health and safety. Specifically, Defense Programs has committed \$3 million per year for its share of the Hydrogeologic Work Plan and will continue to do so.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding Department of Energy activities, please let me know. Should you have additional questions on this matter, please contact John Ordaz of my staff at (301) 903-8055.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Thomas F. Gioconda". The signature is written in a cursive style with large, flowing loops.

THOMAS F. GIOCONDA
Brigadier General, USAF
Acting Deputy Administrator
for Defense Programs

cc:

The Honorable Pete V. Domenici
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510